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Hankins-Haler Report

2005 Legislative Review 8th District

Dear Friends,

The 2005 legislative session is truly one to write home about. We're proud to say that the 8th District fared very well during the 105-day session that adjourned April 24.

Teachers, home health care workers and state employees will receive long-awaited and well-deserved salary increases. Additional money has been targeted to provide for more schools and smaller classroom sizes. Legislation creating a new life sciences discovery fund will benefit our area through additional jobs in connection with the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL).

We also scored millions of dollars for southeast Washington in public works and transportation projects, including funding for the WSU/PNNL bioproducts laboratory in Richland, viticulture research, the Walter Clore Wine and Culinary Center in Prosser, repairs on I-90, expansion of Highway 12 between Pasco and Walla Walla, and the list goes on and on.

In addition, we made inroads toward reforming our state's election system following the November gubernatorial election debacle. We worked to save jobs at Hanford by preventing misguided legislation that would have compounded the problems created by Initiative 297. And the Legislature even approved our bill to crack down on goat thieves.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this and other news from the session in this 2005 Legislative Review. Thank you for the honor of allowing us to serve as your 8th District state representatives.

Sincerely,

Shirley Hankins *Larry Haler*
Shirley Hankins Larry Haler



Representative Shirley Hankins Representative Larry Haler

Millions slated for roads, bridges, rail in 8th District

The Legislature approved a 9.5 cent gas tax increase to be phased in over the next four years to fund \$8.6 billion in highway, bridge, rail and mass transit projects around the state over the next 16 years. The increase will boost the state gas tax in four stages: 3 cents on July 1, 3 cents next year, 2 cents in 2007 and 1.5 cents in 2008.

Cities and counties will receive a half-penny of the 2005 gas tax increase and another half-penny from the 2006 gas tax increase for local road improvements.

To ensure that all transportation tax dollars are spent wisely, nearly \$4 million was provided in the transportation budget for performance audits.

We supported the budget because it invests in important transportation projects that will keep our economy strong in the 8th District. As a member of the House Transportation Committee, **Rep. Hankins** helped to secure many of the local projects in the budget, including:

Rail

Port of Pasco -
Intermodal facility improvements..... \$5,400,000
Washington St. railroad crossing..... \$4,800,000

Calculate your cost

Curious what the gas tax will cost you each year? Here's a way to calculate it. Divide the number of miles driven annually by the miles per gallon your vehicle gets. Then multiply that figure times the amount of the gas tax increase.

(annual miles you drive) ÷ (miles per gallon) = gallons used

(gallons used) x (gas tax increase*) = gas tax increase per year *This is your cost of the gas tax increase per year.*

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \frac{\text{annual miles you drive}}{\text{gallons used}} & \div & \frac{\text{miles per gallon}}{\text{gas tax increase}^*} = \frac{\text{gallons used}}{\text{gas tax increase per year}} \\ & \times & = \$ \end{array}$$

- * .03 in 2005
- * .03 in 2006
- * .02 in 2007
- * .015 in 2008

Example: The average motorist drives 10,827 miles per year. If your vehicle gets 27 miles to the gallon, a 3 cent gas tax would equate to about \$12.03 per year.

Highways

SR 240/Richland Y to Columbia Center interchange - lane additions \$25,619,000
US 12/SR 124 - Burbank interchange \$20,000,000
US 395/Columbia Drive to SR 240 interchange \$17,000,000
SR 240/11 miles south of SR 24 to Snively Road \$14,500,000
SR 240/I-182 to Richland Y - lane additions \$11,932,000
US 12 - McDonald Road to Walla Walla - lane additions \$9,195,000
SR 24/SR 241 to Cold Creek Road - lane additions \$3,800,000
SR 240/Yakima River Bridge at Richland \$3,269,000
SR 22/SR 223 to Prosser - paving..... \$1,631,000
I-182 - Queensgate/Thayer interchange improvements..... \$1,615,000
I-82 to SR 397 intertie \$1,561,000
SR 397/Bridge rail retrofit - Columbia River Bridge west of Kennewick..... \$1,081,000
SR 24 - Vernita safety rest area - replace building . \$666,000
I-82/Badger Road interchange (Exit 109) - paving.. \$552,000
SR 224/Yakima River to SR 240 - paving..... \$547,000
I-82 - Yakima to Prosser - weather advisory radio stations..... \$534,000
SR 224/Benton City to West Richland - paving \$419,000
SR 24/Vernita Bridge rail retrofit \$402,000
I-82/Prosser vicinity - weigh trucks in motion \$385,000
SR 24/SR 240 intersection improvements \$226,000
SR 225/Benton City vicinity - paving..... \$174,000
SR 24/SR 240 - vicinity - paving \$157,000
I-82/Yakitat Road interchange (Exit 93) - paving..... \$148,000
I-82/Goose Gap Road interchange (Exit 104) - paving \$136,000

In addition, the transportation budget provides \$388 million to pay for the first phase of a mountain project that will widen a 15-mile stretch of I-90 to six lanes on Snoqualmie Pass. This is an important link between eastern and western Washington for the economy of our state.

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Capital budget funds local projects

In February, we hosted a trip to the Quad-Cities for several state lawmakers, including: House Speaker Frank Chopp, House Capital Budget Chairman Hans Dunshee, House Technology, Energy and Communications Chairman Jeff Morris, Democratic Caucus Chairman Bill Grant, Republican Caucus Deputy Leader Mike Armstrong and other Republican members. The Speaker and the Capital Budget Committee chairman ultimately decide which projects move forward. We brought them to our communities to show them how important our local projects are, not only for the district, but for the state.

The trip was a worthwhile investment and paid off for our district. Nearly \$39 million was provided for the 8th District in a \$3.3 billion capital construction budget approved by the Legislature.

Most notable in the capital budget is a \$13.1 million allocation to help fund the construction of an agricultural research institute in the Tri-Cities to be operated jointly between Washington State University and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL). The **Bioproducts Sciences and Engineering Laboratory** will house researchers involved in projects to convert low-value agricultural by-products such as hulls, peelings, straw and manure into value-added chemicals for products like plastics, pharmaceuticals and fuel additives. The facility will also support wine industry research and supply much needed classrooms and laboratories for science education at WSU Tri-Cities.

A project **Rep. Haler** had worked on even during the time he was mayor of Richland came to fruition in the capital budget. Up to \$6 million was allocated to **extend infrastructure from Richland** out to an area north of the city where PNNL plans to expand. This will bring more jobs to our area.

In another project that will provide jobs to Prosser, **Rep. Hankins**, who serves on the House Capital Budget Committee, secured \$2.25 million for the **Walter Clore Wine and**

Culinary Arts Center. Named for the father of Washington wine, the Clore center will overlook the Yakima River and showcase our growing wine industry to tourists along Interstate 82.

Other local projects funded in the capital budget include: \$10 million for upgrades to the city of **Kennewick's water treatment plant**; \$4 million to construct a **biolac wastewater treatment plant in West Richland**; \$2.8 million for the **Center for Precision Agriculture**, a new building at WSU-Prosser, which will be used for viticulture research to help local wine producers grow quality grapes; \$300,000 for improvements to **Hansen Park**, \$218,516 for **Benton Conservation District's Amon Creek** water quality program; \$175,000 for the **Columbia Park** regional youth skate and bike park; and \$150,000 for the **Academy of Children's Theatre in Richland**.

The 2005-07 capital budget also contains money for a new state prison in Franklin County and for hundreds of public school and college projects, including two new schools for children in Richland. It's also expected to generate nearly 25,000 jobs across Washington.

Operating budget provides for teachers, schools, government operations

The Legislature approved a two-year, \$26 billion operating budget that heavily invests in education. The budget permanently funds Initiative 728, which reduces class sizes in public schools. It also reinstates Initiative 732, which guarantees annual cost-of-living raises for all public school employees. Teachers will get a 1.2 percent raise this year and a 1.7 percent raise for the 2005-06 school years. State employees will also receive a 3.2 percent raise this year and a 1.6 percent raise next year. The operating budget also increases enrollment at state colleges and universities by 7,900 students and expands health care to an additional 40,000 children.

Preventing thieves from getting your goat

When a citizen in Prosser became the victim of a goat theft, he sought help from Rep. Haler. It turns out that stealing a prize goat didn't amount to much of a crime. Prosecutors said that if someone were to steal a \$1,600 goat, they'd spend zero to 90 days in jail. **Rep. Haler introduced legislation that places goats on the official list of livestock**. Although it was the Senate bill that ultimately passed the Legislature, the measure now makes it a felony to steal a goat. A first-time goat snatcher could get nine months behind bars.



Artist's drawing of WSU/PNNL bioproducts laboratory

Representative Shirley Hankins Representative Larry Haler



Health care makes advances

We remain concerned about the growing costs of health care in our state and the ability for people to access medical services. The Legislature took several actions this year toward advancing health care in our state.

House Bill 1154, signed into law, requires companies with at least 50 employees to provide the same level of **coverage for mental health diseases** as they do for physical ailments.

We provided \$80 million to replace federal funding cut from **community mental health services**. Nearly \$19 million was allocated to continue grants at current levels for community clinics that serve low-income people.



In-home care workers will receive a two-step, 49-cent hourly wage increase, boosting their pay to \$9.42 an hour next year. The contract, which covers 26,000 home-care workers, also lets them earn up to one week's paid vacation each year and adds dental and vision coverage this year.

We also took action to help our **public health departments** in Washington. When voters approved I-695

in 1999 which repealed the state's motor vehicle excise tax, they may not have known that part of that revenue had been used to fund public health departments. Every year since then, public health departments have struggled to meet demands. We are very concerned that they may not be adequately funded to address a public health emergency. That's why **Rep. Haler** co-sponsored House Concurrent Resolution 4410. This bill creates the Joint Select Committee on Public Health Financing. The committee, made up of legislators (including Rep. Haler), will review existing and potential sources of future funding for public health services. The committee's final report is due to the Legislature by July of next year.

Rep. Haler was also instrumental in gaining support for a measure he co-sponsored that reinstates **reasonable ambulance fees**. Until a recent Supreme Court decision, the city of Kennewick had funded the local emergency medical and ambulance service through a flat monthly fee of \$2.60 upon each household,



business and industry within the city. The Supreme Court ruled it could not impose that excise tax. When that happened, ambulance fees jumped to nearly \$1,000 per call. House Bill 1635 allows cities to set and collect rates in an amount sufficient for regulation, operation and maintenance of its ambulance service. This should help to keep charges down to a reasonable rate.

Finally, **Rep. Hankins** supported creation of the **Life Sciences Discovery Fund**. Senate Bill 5581 would invest \$350 million in biotechnology research — much of which could involve the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and bring more jobs to our area. The money would come from bonus payments the state will receive from the national tobacco settlement.



In early April, top players of the Seattle Seahawks visited with Reps. Larry Haler and Shirley Hankins at the state Capitol. Standing from left to right: Robbie Tobeck, Rep. Haler, Mack Strong, Rep. Hankins, and Matt Hasselbeck.

Kennewick used as model for early childhood education

We can think of no better investment for our young children than providing an early start in their education by teaching them to read. For the past 10 years, the Kennewick School District has focused its attention on early childhood education, creating a powerful and effective model literacy program that involves parents and their children.

This year, the Kennewick model caught the attention of the Legislature. A measure was introduced, House Bill 2036, to create a "Ready to Read" program based upon the Kennewick model. The measure was eventually incorporated into the state's operating budget legislation and \$300,000 was appropriated for implementation of the reading program statewide.

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I-297 - A case of unintended consequences

It's always a good idea to read the voters' pamphlet and fully understand the issues before making a decision on an initiative. Unfortunately, **voters were sold a bill of goods before they went to the ballot box to make their decision on Initiative 297**. They approved the measure last November, believing that it would halt nuclear waste shipments to Hanford and lead to the clean-up of the nuclear reservation.

Unfortunately, we think most people supporting I-297 had no understanding of the unintended consequences it would have upon Hanford. Following its passage, the Department of Energy initially moved to stop a wide range of activities and important research work at Hanford and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

The federal government has since sued, seeking to have the initiative overturned. A federal judge has also ruled that the initiative will not be enforced until the lawsuit is resolved. That has allowed research work and activities to continue at Hanford, for now.

We believe there is a strong case against I-297 and that **the best venue for a decision is in the federal court where all of the evidence supporting the work at Hanford can be presented**.

In a desperate move to save pieces of the initiative, backers of I-297 put forth Senate Bill 5445 and House Bill 1474 to clarify that the measure affects only federal nuclear wastes at Hanford, not medical and other nuclear wastes generated by unrelated industries.

We felt that if the Legislature intervened, it could impose even more unintended consequences against Hanford, in-

cluding the possibility of weakening the case against I-297 in federal court. So we vigorously fought against those bills in an effort to prevent permanent shutdown of Hanford and its related activities. Fortunately, our efforts were successful and both of those measures died.

This will now allow the federal court to decide whether the initiative violates the U.S. Constitution and if I-297 should be thrown out.

"I-297 and the bills backed by its supporters are the most dangerous pieces of legislation that I've dealt with in more than 20 years. They would have absolutely wiped out the Hanford reservation clean-up efforts."

— Rep. Shirley Hankins

"The initiative and these bills are a part of a 25-year attack on the Tri-Cities to shut down Hanford."

— Rep. Larry Haler

Election reform bills: A step in the right direction

The major election legislation adopted this session represents a step forward toward filling the cracks exposed by the 2004 general election.

Eight election-related bills were signed into law May 3 by the governor. Two measures, Senate Bills 5499 and 5743, account for the most changes. For instance, they'll require changes in provisional and absentee ballots to prevent them from being counted with poll ballots. People registering to vote will have to sign that they are eligible (U.S. citizen, at least 18 years old) and understand they'll be reported to authorities if they vote illegally. **Rep. Haler added an amendment to SB 5743 that makes it a felony for an unqualified person to register to vote.** Previously, the crime had been listed as a misdemeanor.

Voter rolls will also be checked against law enforcement and court databases to identify felons. Counties will wait six days longer before certifying elections so military/overseas ballots may arrive. And marking on ballots to "enhance" them will be prohibited.

Even so, the Legislature failed to address several other most important concerns, like proof of identification, proof of citizenship and cleanup of the voter registration rolls.

We believe more needs to be done in the future to ensure the integrity of our election process. As Chelan County Superior Court Judge John Bridges recently stated in his court ruling,

"The voters of this state are in a position to demand of their executive and legislative bodies that remedial measures be instituted immediately. And clearly, the evidence here suggests that the problems require more than just constructing new buildings and hiring more staff."

Representative Shirley Hankins Representative Larry Haler



FFTF's closure a mistake

It's said that if the door of opportunity knocks, open it. We had that door of opportunity here in our community — a one-of-a-kind experimental reactor that had the potential to produce isotopes for cancer treatment and industrial needs. The Fast Flux Test Facility would have opened many doors to the future. That's why we fought to save the FFTF. We sent a letter to the governor asking her to bar the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) from removing the remaining sodium from the facility. We also asked for a public review of DOE's decision to close FFTF. Unfortunately, the door was permanently closed and locked when the DOE began to drill into the reactor's core at the end of April. It's a sad end to what could

have been a great opportunity for our community — and for the world.

Legislature approves bill to employ apprentices

We supported legislation that requires the use of state-approved apprentices in all major public works projects. Currently there are 240 state-approved apprenticeship programs that provide 10,000 jobs in Washington. We expect Senate Bill 5097, which was signed into law, to bring new jobs to our community through these new workforce training requirements.

We're here to serve as well as represent you!

Solving problems is what being a legislator is all about. We work for you throughout the year, not just when the Legislature is in session. If you're having difficulties dealing with a state agency, or if you have questions about state government, or if you have suggestions or concerns about legislation, give us a call! If you are looking for a speaker for your group to talk about state government issues, we may also be able to help. Our offices are staffed year-round in Olympia.

Here's how you can reach us:

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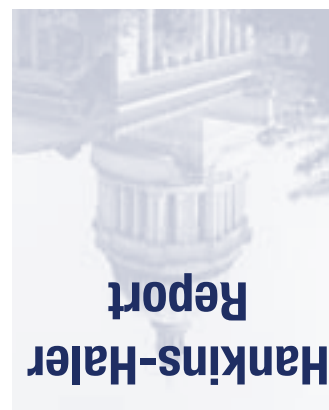
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